Kwajalein power plant open for business

HED completes $39 million project ahead of schedule and under budget

By Michelle Cain

The completion of a new power plant on Roi Namur, one of the Kwajalein Atoll islands, was marked with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in October. The project, begun in December 1999, was completed two months ahead of schedule and under budget by J.A. Jones Construction Company. —U.S. Army photo

The completion of a project more than ten years in the making was marked by a ribbon-cutting ceremony October 3, on the Kwajalein Atoll island of Roi Namur. Construction of the 13.5 megawatt power plant, which replaces the original structure built in1961, was completed two months ahead of schedule and the plant began operation in August.

HED originally began the project in 1989 with the preparation of programming documents. The first Concept Design was done in 1991, but the project was delayed due to technical issues and the stiff competition for MCA dollars. A final design was completed in 1998 and construction was awarded to J.A. Jones Construction Company (JAJ) at a cost of $38.6 million, more than $10 million under budget. Ground was broken for the project in December 1999.

"J.A. Jones has done excellent work on previous projects," said Rodney Leong, HED project manager for Kwajalein since 1983 . "Most of their construction has been ahead of schedule and trouble-free. We're quite happy with their construction."

The construction crew consisted of 125 men with equal numbers of Marshallese and American workers. Over 400,000 man-hours were worked without a lost-time deficiency on this project.

"That is an excellent safety record in the construction industry," said Mike Gwyn, vice-president and manager of the International Division for JAJ. "We had great cooperation from Raytheon, the Corps of Engineers and the Marshallese work force."

Roi Namur Island is one of 11 in the Kwajalein Atoll leased by the U.S. for testing various technologies in support of current national missile defense systems. The critical missions performed at Roi Namur require extremely high reliability and availability, said Leong. Their radars provide the nation's space surveillance network deep space tracking. This includes space shuttle support, data on new foreign launches from Russia and China, and high resolution space object identification.

"Reliability of the plant is extremely important," said Leong. "One malfunction with the power plant during an important missile test could waste $100 million."

The 34,000 square foot facility houses nine 1500 kilowatt diesel engine-generator sets with state-of-the-art controls. This is an important feature, said Leong. "It needs to be very reliable," he explained. "In case one or two generators go offline, other units can be quickly and smoothly brought online to minimize the disruption of power."

Leong credits the smooth completion of the project to several people.

"It was a great team effort," he said. "Everyone throughout the project's life, from the designers to the construction workers, worked very closely with the ultimate users, the power plant operators, to ensure customer satisfacton. The partnership between the Kwajalein Resident Office (KRO) and the contractor has been terrific."

He added that KRO's Louis Askew, Resident Engineer, and George Lum, Construction Representative, were key to the successful early completion of this high quality product.

Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time. Goodness, remembrance and love have no end. —**President George W. Bush**